A U M

The Self, rising in the firmament of the heart,—sun of wisdom, darkness-dispersing, all-present, all-supporting,—shines forth and illumines all.

—*Shankaracharya*

THEOSOPHY

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

A SAMPLING OF RELIGION

NEARLY a hundred years have passed since H. P. Blavatsky addressed the Western world of her day in *Isis Unveiled,* setting the stage for what she would say by asking the question: "Where, who, what is God?"

While she called this book a key to both science and theology, her work, from the viewpoint of the world, must have seemed more religious than scientific in spirit, since the synthesis of the two outlooks afforded in *Isis* involved principles and laws neither accessible nor acceptable to the scientific method of that day; moreover, it rested upon conceptions of spiritual reality and moral and psychic dynamics which were virtually unknown to Western thought.

The rejection of Theosophy, as resolver of the contradictions between science and religion, by the representatives of both these nineteenth-century orthodoxies was expected and in effect predicted by H.P.B. She more than once remarked that the fruit of her labors would become evident only in the twentieth century, and we may think it likely that by this she meant during its closing years. Her Prefaces to both *Isis* and *The Secret Doctrine* indicate her thorough awareness of the narrow boundaries of conventional opinion. When she wrote, the time had not come for a general awakening among scientists to the inadequacy of their assumptions, while the determined resistance to either criticism or

innovation on the part of the clergy was notorious. The academic world was little better. As H.P.B. remarked in *The Secret Doctrine* (II, 650), "past as well as present daily experience teaches that no truth has ever been accepted by the learned bodies unless it dovetailed with the habitual preconceived ideas of their professors."

In other words, reconciliation of science and religion through the philosophy of the Wisdom Religion was impossible at the institutional level. One could say that, so far as institutions were concerned, H.P.B. issued only challenges. Her appeal was not to them, but to individuals, to thoughtful and questioning minds with the resources and capacity for synthesis, and in whom the motives for pursuing an answer to age-old philosophical questions would not be inhibited by orthodox constraints. The appeal to these minds was partly by exposure of the intellectual and moral shortcomings of both science and religion, but mainly in the affirmations and teachings of religious philosophy and scientific religion provided by Theosophy.

At the outset, as we have seen from the question with which *Isis* begins, the language is religious in content and tone. The question, "What is God?", as the entire body of H.P.B.'s works shows, is unanswerable, yet capable of endless discussion and exposition. The central import, however, of Theosophical teaching was immediately indicated by her in the next paragraph of the Preface to *Isis,* where she spoke of the Oriental Sages who were her instructors:

> They showed us that by combining science with religion, the existence of God and immortality of man's spirit may be demonstrated like a problem of Euclid. For the first time we received the assurance that the Oriental philosophy has room for no other faith than an absolute and immovable faith in the omnipotence of man's own immortal self. We were taught that this omnipotence comes from the kinship of man's spirit with the Universal Soul—God! The latter, they said, can never be demonstrated but by the former. Man-spirit proves God-spirit, as the one drop of water proves a source from which it must have come.

We know something of the response obtained to this mode of thinking of science and religion from the articles written by H.P.B. for the *Theosophist* and *Lucifer;* we know that individuals of both religious and scientific background joined the Society, that here

and there scholars were attracted by the occult philosophy, and that a great many people—many more than can be counted or guessed at—were affected by Theosophical ideas. The long-term influence of H.P.B.'s work may remain unmeasured, yet that great changes have taken place in the thinking of the followers of both science and religion is now hardly in doubt. Popular journalism continually exploits the novelty of scientists turning to religion and of religionists manifesting a readiness to open their minds to fresh and often bizarre inspiration. Only recently the British scientific journal, *Nature,* declared for the importance of open-minded investigation of psychical phenomena—of the sort represented by the term ESP—while in the United States the science editor of the *Saturday Review* acknowledged the need of Western thinkers to give a fair hearing to the new doctrines of psychology—some quite extravagant—which are attracting so many followers in America and elsewhere.

What of religion? While questionnaires are of dubious value—especially in relation to matters involving the deepest human convictions—sometimes they serve to open up discussion which is of greater import than the questions asked might suggest. This seems the case with the replies of several of the writers of whom the editors of *Harper's* inquired: "Why do you still believe in God, in the Promise of the Cross?"

("Promise of the Cross" involves expectation of immortality.)

To clear the air for serious discussion, the *Harper's* editors begin with a suitable comment on the superficial side of the present "return to religion." The familiar cliché, "It doesn't matter what faith you have, so long as you've got a faith," they remark, is "quite in harmony with the fickle commitments of those who yesterday gave themselves to Scientology, today to Arica, tomorrow to Maharaj Ji, and Sunday to Billy Graham." Hoping for replies at a deeper level, and at the same time to avoid the glib responses of clerics, the editors asked several serious writers known to be Christian to contribute answers (which appear in the April issue).

One of these, Michael Novak, begins by objecting to the question. He finds it "wrongly placed," and likely to "force a wrong answer." He says:

> God, I was taught long ago, is not a prop of anyone's psyche, not a comfort, not a function of my needs. God is, but does not manipulate any individual's life. Is close, does not obtrude.

Is unseen, unfelt, untouched, not conceptualizable. . . .

If there is no God, I would want to live exactly as I do now, so far as inner attitudes and aspirations go: honesty, courage, freedom, community would seem equally attractive. There are so many facsimilies of God that people disown, and so many poses that people strike up (Bertrand Russell at times, Sartre, Antony Flew, and others) when they show themselves superior to those for whom God is present. Others are so certain that God exists, as a sign of their superiority to unbelievers, that they nauseate. . . .

Immortality (which often seems to me plausible, to have a certain rightness about it; which often seems to me to have already begun, as though life in history is indeed a kind of mystification, illusion, pretense)—immortality, if there is any such thing, will take care of itself. Only for what I do in the years allotted have I responsibility; only there is it necessary to concentrate my energies.

Here, perhaps, is some explanation of why Mr. Novak's prose, found elsewhere, has sometimes impressive insight and strength.

The well-known psychiatrist, Robert Coles, confessed to church attendance and inward search, then added:

I worry, though, about public statements by an individual about his or her religious convictions. Writers, especially, are cursed by self-serving egotism, and an inclination to arrogance: the sin of pride. In *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men,* Agee does a wondrously illuminating job of showing how banal, trite, and self-centered even the most intelligent minds can become when they take themselves, their inclinations, assumptions, values a little too seriously. (He was angered by a questionnaire that *Partisan Review* sent out in 1939 to people like him, asking their opinions on a whole range of issues and practices—among them the matter of their religious faith, if any, and its relationship, if any, to their work.) So, I submit this statement with, at the very minimum, a sense of foreboding.

Dr. Coles ends by saying that the people he looks up to could be regarded as having "a religious sensibility." Among those he names are Dorothy Day, Georges Bernanos, Simone Weil, and James Agee. (Agee, incidentally, in his tempestuous reply to the *Partisan Review* questionnaire, had said on the question about religion: "I feel sufficiently intense allegiance toward certain shapes of fact and toward certain ideas that I prefer not to speak of them here, beyond saying that no organization of thought or of persons has ever held them, that they are antipathetic to such, and that I feel a rarity but by no means a lack of company . . . ")

Anne Fremantle, another contributor, speaks of faith as a "gift," then remarks: "But a far greater gift is our total freedom—the freedom of our will to choose, to act, and to reject. It was that total freedom that caused the Fall, and the liturgy of Good Friday calls it the blessed Fall, because it in turn caused the Incarnation." She concludes:

> I began, like Théophile Gautier, as one "for whom the outside world exists," and I rejoiced in it. And I still rejoice. But gradually I realized that the "all things visible" of the Nicene Creed were less important than the "and invisible," such as life, time, emotion, pain, sound, thought. So now I just try to "be still" even though I will never "know that He is God."

Thus there is manifest today a great change from nineteenth-century attitudes in the spirit and thinking of today's religious people, even of those who regard themselves as somewhat "orthodox" Christians. A wide latitude of independent reflection is exercised by nearly all as a matter of course. Agreeing with Kierkegaard, George Reedy says he is quite aware that the Church has "frequently stood between human beings and Christianity." He also admits recognition of other paths to God—in Socrates, in Marcus Aurelius, in the faiths of Jews and Mohammedans, and in Buddhism, even though Buddhists "do not see salvation in a personal God." Anne Fremantle speaks of finding it "impossible to believe in any sort of personal immortality (though I am prepared to say that I may be wrong), for it seems to contradict eternity, in which I can truly and always believe."

George Reedy's comment on contemporary thinking seems an excellent if incomplete explanation of the "return to religion," as well as an example of the spirit which animates many of those who have returned:

> I also find a superstitious worship of false gods—twentieth-century paganism shot through with superstition—of course, of a modern variety. How many hundreds of thousands of men and women died in Vietnam because the computer told our leaders that they would "win" when the "kill ratio" reached 8 to 1—or some such grisly rate? Frankly, I believe the ancient pagans were more sensible. The Delphic oracle always gave questioners a mystic answer which made them think and frequently come to the right conclusion. The computer always produces a specific answer which puts an end to thought and induces immediate, and frequently fatal, action.
>
> Naturally, the problem does not lie with the computer which is a useful instrument. The problem lies with the tendency of

> modern pagans to confuse a machine with God and to forget that it is merely giving them computations. . . .
>
> It may be that the Church and even the name of Christianity will pass away. But, like Kierkegaard, I believe the force itself will not die.

If these writers are in any way representative of the rank and file of present-day Christian believers—and, judging from the unrest in the churches, and the rejections of orthodoxy that so frequently occur, there is reason to think that they speak for many who are less articulate but have similar thoughts—then Christian orthodoxy, except for the Fundamentalist sects, is no more. George Reedy is far from being the only one who actually suspects that Christianity may dissolve into other forms of faith. Such expressions are common enough, and the wide hospitality of many Christians to conceptions found in other religions is a characteristic symptom of change. Last year a Lutheran church in New York announced as its program for "Reformation Sunday" a fare which began with readings from *The Voice of the Silence,* then offered texts from a version of "The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali," the latter being accompanied by music from Alban Berg, with piano and voice. The occasion, oddly enough, was titled "Jazz Vespers." The spiritual illumination obtained in this way may be questionable, yet, as evidence of the decline and disappearance of orthodoxy, this program could hardly be more conclusive. A compilation of such innovations and departures from custom in the churches would soon become monotonous.

One thing seems clear. The *dogmas* of religion are no longer a power, no longer a source of religious definition or commitment for modern Christians. Nor is there, today, the same respect for science which raised so many barriers to even simple investigation of Theosophy during the nineteenth century. Science, through its employment in war, and its excesses in technology, has very nearly discredited itself, while a generation of effective critics has made the barrenness of scientific materialism unmistakably plain. The thought of the world—it's serious thought—is rapidly approaching a crossroads of decision. It might be said that many of H.P.B.'s essential criticisms of both science and religion have already been adopted—whether knowingly or not—by intelligent people. These judgments now seem endlessly repeated, and while they may not be sufficiently explicit from the viewpoint of occult philosophy, a clear change of polarity in general opinion is now evident. In fact,

the cry for new beginnings, for better and truer religion, for spiritual philosophy, for humane and ethically grounded science, is heard on every hand.

Yet, despite all these encouraging signs, there are serious lacks, deep confusions, and vague wonderings in the thought of the time, however sound the basic intuitions such as those expressed by the contributors to *Harper's*. Missing, it seems quite evident, are the principles of order in thought that are needed to make religion "scientific." In one of her synthesizing statements in *The Secret Doctrine* (I, 44-45), H.P.B. wrote briefly of the hidden cause of all existence, the first emanations of which are "the most complete abstractions mind can conceive." It is here that philosophy —philosophy at once religious and scientific—must begin. The author of *The Secret Doctrine* continues:

> These abstractions must of necessity be postulated as the cause of the material Universe which presents itself to the senses and intellect; and they underlie the secondary and subordinate powers of Nature, which, anthropomorphized, have been worshipped as God and gods by the common herd of every age. It is impossible to conceive anything without a cause; the attempt to do so makes the mind a blank. This is virtually the condition to which the mind must come at last when we try to trace back the chain of causes and effects, but both science and religion jump to this condition of blankness much more quickly than is necessary; for they ignore the metaphysical abstractions which are the only conceivable cause of physical concretions.

This statement is in effect prefatory to extended consideration of the unfolding causation which produces the universe and everything in it. It introduces the high philosophy of the Wisdom Religion in terms of its most disciplined and exacting ideas. The key to an understandng of the world and ourselves, H.P.B. makes plain, is the transcendental metaphysics of *The Secret Doctrine*. Writing two years later, in an article published in the *North American Review* for August, 1890, she made a similar statement, this time addressing the literate readers of a leading American journal of opinion. She said:

> At least we may claim to have placed before the thinking public a logical, coherent, and philosophical scheme of man's origin, destiny, and evolution—a scheme pre-eminent above all for its rigorous adherence to justice. . . . In one word, our whole aim and desire are to help, in at least some degree, to-

> ward arriving at correct scientific views upon the nature of man, which carry with them the means of reconstructing for the present generation the deductive metaphysical or transcendental philosophy which alone is the firm, unshakable foundation of every religious philosophy. . . . Amid the increasing splendors of a progress purely material, of a science that nourished the intellect, but left the spirit to starve, Humanity, dimly feeling its origin and presaging its destiny, has stretched out towards the East empty hands that only a *spiritual* philosophy can fill. Aching from the divisions, the jealousies, the hatreds, that rend its very life, it has cried for some sure foundation on which to build the solidarity it senses, some metaphysical basis from which its loftiest social ideals may rise secure.

Again, the question of the relevance of Theosophy presents itself to the intelligence of thinking people. In this century, the barriers are much reduced, although the distractions might be said to be much increased. Meanwhile there is a vacuum in modern thought, for the most part now being filled by the most trivial popular materials. Yet serious questionings are going on, hungry minds are abroad in every land, and decent and humanitarian thinkers seem sincerely looking for answers. The age should soon be ripe for a fresh introduction to the Theosophical philosophy. So, in years to come, we shall see to what extent it has become possible for larger numbers to recognize that there is indeed the means to a sure foundation for uniting scientific and religious thought—a metaphysical base from which Humanity's "loftiest social ideals may rise secure."

Divinity is always acquired. It is not an endowment. It does not exist of itself. If we could be *made* good, if we could be *made* to turn around and take a righteous course, life might seem very much easier to us. But there is no escaping the law; no one can get us "off" from the effects of our wrong-doing; no one can confer knowledge on another. Each one has to see and know for himself. Each one has to gain Divinity of himself, and in his own way.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

STUDIES IN ISIS UNVEILED

INTRODUCTORY

> In *Isis Unveiled* the explanations of a hundred mysteries lie but half buried, only waiting for the application of intelligence guided by a little Occult knowledge to come out into the light of day.
>
> —H. P. BLAVATSKY

ISIS UNVEILED is the first published book by H. P. Blavatsky. It was issued at New York by the publishing house of J. W. Bouton in the fall of 1877.

The plates were stereotyped and in all six numbered editions have been issued with the Bouton imprint at varying dates down to 1895. All these editions are identical except that after the fourth edition a new portrait of Madame Blavatsky was used for the frontispiece of the first volume.

Isis Unveiled is H.P.B.'s first gift to Humanity. In many respects it is her greatest. It is the first direct communication from the Masters of Wisdom to the world of men in many, many centuries. It constitutes Their invitation to all who will listen, to enter upon the study of the Spirit and Nature with Those who know how to teach. It is intended to convey information and do a work of clearance for the individual student, without which he cannot make true progress, and without which Their subsequent Teachings cannot be properly availed of.

Nature's modes and actions do not obey the whims or the mandates of the individual. The student succeeds only as he waits upon and studies nature in her operations. The laws and processes of the higher nature are the same. They can only be successfully studied in their manifestation, and these do not conform to the prejudices or the preconceptions of the would-be neophyte in their mysteries.

More than once, in later years, H.P.B. threw out hints about *Isis*. These hints, like the book itself, were addressed to the intuition and not to the curiosity of the reader. Thus, writing in the

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NOTE.—This series, of which the first installment is introductory, consists of collations from *Isis Unveiled*, topically arranged. The series first appeared in vols. 5 and 6 of THEOSOPHY. References to *Isis* are given at the conclusion of each installment.

Theosophist in November, 1882, five years after the publication of *Isis,* she said, in the form of a mere *obiter dictum*:

> In *Isis* the explanations of a hundred mysteries lie but half buried . . . only waiting for the application of intelligence guided by a little Occult knowledge to come out into the light of day.

This was written and published in India—on the other side of the world from New York. Nearly eight years later, in May, 1891—and again on the other side of the world from India—she gave a final statement in regard to *Isis* in her article, "My Books," printed in *Lucifer* at London. This was written a few days before her death, when she knew she was going, and was not printed till after her departure from the body. It ought, therefore, to bear an especial significance to all who believe in her sincerity and good faith. This is what she said:

> I maintain that *Isis* contains a mass of original and never hitherto divulged information on occult subjects. . . . I defend the ideas and teachings in it, with no fear of being charged with conceit, since *neither ideas nor teaching are mine,* as I have always declared; and I maintain that both are of the greatest value to mystics and students of Theosophy. . . .
>
> Every word of information found in this work or in my later writings, comes from the teachings of our Eastern Masters, and . . . many a passage in these works has been written by me *under their dictation.*

It is human nature to desire to reap where we have not sown. It is so much easier to take things at second-hand. Yet the very first lesson in Occultism is accuracy as to the facts. And again, students often begin with *The Secret Doctrine,* which they read upside down, without aim or direction, because they have neither undergone the necessary preliminary study and training, nor *established a connection.* Making no headway, they fall easily prey to the thousand and one claims as to teachers and teachings. Seeking something easy and promising, they go far astray in blind paths—or worse.

Not for naught nor in lightness did H.P.B. write on the title page of *Isis* that it is a *Master Key* to the mysteries that encompass the two greatest problems with which the human mind has wrestled in all ages—Science and Theology. If H.P.B. was the Agent of Masters, and did Their work, what She has left of record must be a true guide for every student in any and every difficulty, and must have been recorded for that very purpose. That she *was* Their Agent is shown by the Message she brought, by her life, by her

word, and by Theirs. To suppose that anything she wrote can be neglected, cast aside, explained away, or rejected, is to affirm that the Masters are as weak, as impotent and as unreliable as human nature.

We believe that the more we study *Isis Unveiled*, the more will our conviction be strengthened in Theosophy, in Masters, and in H.P.B., Their Messenger. We believe that only by such study will our present differences be dissolved, and that *unity of aim, purpose and teaching* obtain among all students of Theosophy that assuredly obtains among the Masters of Wisdom.

Help From Masters

Question—If Masters really exist, why do they not make themselves known to earnest seekers after truth, and especially to such as are working for the good of mankind? And why do they not effectuate peace on earth and right education of the young?

Answer—This question has been very frequently answered, and even by the Masters themselves. As to the last part, they said in the *Occult World* that if it were possible to alter the state of things and to make a peaceful earth and a right humanity without following the law of evolution, they would willingly do it, but mankind can only be altered step by step. They have also stated that they do not make themselves objectively known to believers in them except in those cases where those believers are ready in all parts of their nature, are definitely pledged to them, with the full understanding of the meaning of the pledge. But they have also stated that they help all earnest seekers after truth, and that it is not necessary for those seekers to know from where the help comes so long as it is received. In the *Path* this subject was discussed in its other bearings. Personally I know that the Masters do help powerfully, though unseen, all those who earnestly work and sincerely trust in their higher nature, while they follow the voice of conscience without doubt or cavil.

—W. Q. Judge

FEARLESSNESS AND COURAGE

FEARLESSNESS is the first of the godlike qualities, according to the *Bhagavad-Gita*. In consideration of the other qualities with which it is associated, one may think that fearlessness is indeed a characteristic of the self-governed sage, one who has perfected himself in the disciplines of control of all his powers and capacities, and in whom the attributes of the spiritual being have undiluted expression.

But what of ordinary courage—a quality which even the uncertain and the timid may find emerging in themselves in hours of trial—and which becomes an ennobling strength despite the presence of fear and anxiety? The comparison might be puzzling, save for the help we have in the teaching of the dual nature of man. The courage shown by the ordinary man comes from the Arjuna who is hearkening to Krishna; even in his imperfection, something divine and godlike is reflected in his character, and he rises to the call of the highest he knows.

This response may be thought of as coming from a flash of intuition—a sense of the reality of man's nature, although without, perhaps, a conscious and reflective realization of the full meaning of that reality. But from persistence in courage the position of the perceiver is assumed, even in the midst of difficulty and seeming contradiction, so that, in time, there may come also those perceptions and recognitions which bring what Krishna calls "confirmation" in spiritual knowledge. The foundation of this outlook is simply described by Mr. Judge in his *Notes on the Bhagavad-Gita* (p. 23):

> . . . the substratum, or support, for the whole Cosmos, is the presiding spirit, and all the various changes in life, whether of a material nature or solely in mental states, are cognizable because the presiding spirit within is not modifiable. Were it otherwise, then we would have no memory, for with each passing event, we, becoming merged in it, could not remember anything, that is, we would see no changes. There must therefore be something eternally persisting, which is the witness and perceiver of every passing change, itself unchangeable. All objects,

> and all states of what western philosophers call Mind, are modifications, for in order to be seen or known by us, there must be some change, either partial or total, from a precedent state. The perceiver of these changes is the inner man—Arjuna-Krishna.

What, we may wonder, leads to the full awareness here suggested by Mr. Judge—a fulfillment, we may think, which transforms courage into the godlike quality of fearlessness? Again Mr. Judge's *Notes* (p. 46) are illuminating. He remarks that Krishna "insists on the scrupulous performance of natural duty," and later continues (p. 61):

> The attitude to be assumed, then, is that of doing every act, small and great, trifling or important, because it is before us to do, and as a mere carrying out by us as instruments of the will of that Deity who is ourself. Nor should we stop to inquire whether the act is of any use to the Lord within, as some ask. For, they say, of what possible benefit to Him can be the small hourly acts which, as soon as done, are forgotten? It is not for us to inquire. The act that pleases that Lord is the act which is done as presented with no attachment to its result, while the act that is unpleasing to Him is the one which we do, desiring some result therefrom.

With this practice established, the next step, we may think, is the attainment of Resignation. Entering the true Path, Mr. Judge says (p. 44), is not possible "until resignation is consummated." Learning to accept whatever comes as coming under Law—as, in fact, just in fact what we desire—is the substantial equivalent of *knowing* that this is a just universe. And to think otherwise, says Mr. Judge, is "blindness."

The connection of resignation with fearlessness is plain enough. Resignation or reliance on the Law means doing what lies before one today, for the good of others, without hope or thought of reward. This must indeed constitute the attitude and habit of the true soldier or *Kshatriya.*

The warrior or fearless man may be recognized by the constancy of his courage. He is confirmed in his courage, making it fearlessness. He does not sometimes "rise" to heroic action, but is the natural hero at all times.

The lore of the heroic, throughout literature, provides the rich instruction of tradition in that wonderful and inspiring transformation of the courageous person into the hero. Each age has its account of the ordeals endured, the hazards encountered, the risks

undertaken, for the sake of an ideal—or, as Mr. Judge might put it, in order to do one's duty. Finally, the aspirant reaches that state of dauntless determination which Krishna describes in his counsel to Arjuna: "Throwing every deed on me, and with thy meditation fixed upon the Higher Self, resolve to fight, without expectation, devoid of egotism and free from anguish." One willing and able to apply this counsel is thereby fitted to become one with the Supreme Spirit.

What is the transforming power? It is the feeling of immortal resolve, born in the human heart, and bringing to consciousness, through effort maintained life after life, progressive realization of the god who struggles to regain his lost kingdom, to generate a field for spiritual action, even while encased in a body, and to know the Self as the spirit within. Mr. Crosbie throws a light on this gradual awakening (*Gita Notes*, pp. 148-49):

> As it is from the Spirit in Man that all law and power proceeds, each human being creates his own limitations on every plane of being; he can transcend those limitations only by reverting to and maintaining his immortality, as the observer and experiencer of all the passing changes, himself unchanged and unchanging.

Are then, fearlessness and courage different qualities? The answer must be yes and no. In time they are different, but in essence they are the same. In time, the aspirant who would be "one of fortune's favored soldiers" brings his courage to a pitch of consistency that is finally indistinguishable from a fearless heart. His courage, as *Kshatriya*, has been his "lifetime meditation" in life after life, and so he has forged a matrix for egoic presence on this plane. The vast literature of the days and works of heroes is sufficient evidence of the world-wide recognition, throughout ages, of the nobility which may come to birth in all human beings.

Ich dien, I serve, is a truly royal motto. And it is the mark of nobleness to volunteer the lowest service, the greatest spirit only attaining to humility.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

letters · questions · comment

What can be learned from dreams in relation to living a higher life? Are the faculties employed in ordinary dreams different from those in prophetic dreams?

Dreams may become evidence of both the reality and the complexity of the inner side of human life, and for this reason have great value to one who seeks self-knowledge. The desire to live a higher life is strengthened from realization of the reality of the inner being and its purposes, and dreams are a means of confirming the sense of that reality. The statement of Job, "In dreams and in visions of the night man is instructed," is no idle claim, as may be seen from a reading of H.P.B.'s Appendix on Dreams in the *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*. There will be found material affording direct answers to the questions asked. For example, toward the end of this section, in answer to the question, "Is it a good thing to cultivate dreaming?", H.P.B. replies: "It is by cultivating the power of what is called 'dreaming' that clairvoyance is developed." Now since seership or clairvoyance is said to be almost invariably the stage of development reached before adeptship, the importance of learning from dreams becomes obvious. One may think that the reason for this is that dreams provide first-hand evidence of the processes of egoic activity, leading to conscious exercise of the powers of higher Manas while here in a body.

Study of and reflection on the various kinds of dreams is an application of Mr. Judge's advice to try to see occult significance in every event that comes our way. Before long, we might think, the difference between "ordinary" and "prophetic" dreams would be plain to us from internal evidence. Meanwhile, we are told by H.P.B. that the "principles" active during ordinary dreams "are *Kama,* the seat of the personal Ego and of desire awakened into chaotic activity by the slumbering reminiscences of the lower Manas." Prophetic dreams, she says, "are impressed on our memory by the Higher Self, and are generally plain and clear: either a voice heard or the coming event foreseen."

However, a prophetic dream may fail of being recorded by reason of the resistance of the brain fibre. It is clear from what H.P.B. says in her article, "The Universe in a Nutshell," that the tuning of our inner senses and the centers of the brain is a way of opening

ourselves to instruction in dream. In this article H.P.B. compares the conditions of the external man, determined from the keynote struck by the inner being, to the aggregate of all sounds in nature, resolved into a definite pitch to those who can listen and hear. This inner man is not a vague, indiscriminate vapor, but is, in its various sheaths, potentially a more highly organized entity than its physical envelope, equipped to perceive at levels beyond the awareness of the bodily senses. As she explains:

> Therefore, we say, man, in addition to the physical, has also a spiritual brain. If the former is wholly dependent for the degree of its receptivity on its own physical structure and development, it is, on the other hand, entirely subordinate to the latter, inasmuch as it is the spiritual Ego alone, and accordingly as it leans more towards its two highest principles, or towards its physical shell, that can impress more or less vividly the outer brain with the perception of things purely spiritual or immaterial. Hence it depends on the acuteness of the mental feelings of the inner Ego, on the degree of spirituality of its faculties, to transfer the impression of the scenes its semi-spiritual brain perceives, the words it hears and what it feels, to the sleeping physical brain of the outer man. The stronger the spirituality of the faculties of the latter, the easier it will be for the Ego to awake the sleeping hemispheres, arouse into activity the sensory ganglia and the cerebellum, and to impress the former—always in full inactivity and rest during the deep sleep of man with the vivid picture of the subject so transferred.

This makes clear Mr. Judge's statement, in "Three Planes of Human Life," that what we should try to accomplish is a "clearing up and vivification" of the dreaming state so that, the confusion and distortion existing there being removed, a man may retain a "wider and brighter memory" of what occurred in the condition of Sushupti, or the deep-sleep state. This is done by thinking and acting during the waking state in ways that create a focus of Egoic consciousness, forming a continuous link with Sushupti to order the material of dreams. Mr. Judge concludes:

> The subject is one of enormous extent as well as great importance, and theosophists are urged to purify, elevate, and concentrate the thoughts and acts of their waking hours so that they shall not continually and aimlessly, night after night and day succeeding day, go into and return from these natural and wisely appointed states, no wiser, no better able to help their fellow men. For by this way, as by the spider's small thread, we may gain the free space of spiritual life.

EVERYDAY OCCULTISM

THEOSOPHISTS may find endless correspondences and analogies between the *Gita* and the specific teachings of H. P. Blavatsky; indeed, between her teachings and the revealed or inspired scriptures of every people. It is this *concordance* which is to be sought, if the great First Object of the Theosophical Movement is to be achieved, and hence the Second Object of the Parent Theosophical Society is a prime factor in the realization of that named as First. The Three Objects are as one and indivisible as the Three Fundamental Propositions of *The Secret Doctrine,* or as what are, from the necessities of language, separately spoken of as Spirit, Mind, and Matter.

"The numbers 3, 4, 7, and 10," says H.P.B., "as synthesizing the *Unit* (macrocosm or microcosm, the evolution of a solar system or a man, an idea or a system of philosophy), are prominent" in every allegory. The combinations and correspondences of these numbers, marking the stages of evolution or Karma, are infinite. It is long indeed before the student extricates himself from entanglement in the mere *processes* of Life and begins in real earnest to seek the unbroken threads of order, or Law, instead of miracle, chance, accident, and so on, as the true Path through the mysteries of existence.

Mr. Sinnett and Mr. Hume possessed highly organized and trained minds, but their correspondence with the Theosophical Mahatmas and their subsequent course, show how extremely difficult, not to say impossible, it is for the complex being to grasp the mathematical simplicity of basic Nature. In Letter XIII of *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett,* written in reply to a list of "Cosmological Notes and Queries" submitted by them, one of the Masters endeavors to clear up for them, and therefore for us, our fundamental difficulty. It is in this Letter that there are some missing words which, however, may be tentatively supplied, as italicized, thus:

> Realize but once the process of the cycle of one sphere and you have realized them all. One man is born like another man,

NOTE.—This article is from a series of essays on the *Bhagavad-Gita*, first printed in volume 15 of THEOSOPHY.

> one race evolves, develops and declines like another and all other races. Nature follows the same groove from the "creation" of a universe down to that of a mosquito. In studying esoteric cosmogony, keep a spiritual eye upon the physiological process of human birth; proceed from cause to effect establishing *the identity of the process* along analogies between the *evolution of physical man* and that of a world. In our doctrine *of evolution you* will find necessary the synthetic *method of approach*—you will have to embrace the whole *course of the cycle*—that is to say to blend the *macrocosm and the microcosm* together—before you are en*abled correctly* to study the parts separately or analyze *any one of* them with profit to your understanding. Cosmology is the physiology of the universe spiritualized, for there is but one law.

All this may well stand as a key to the study of religion, science, and philosophy, which deal with cosmology. They are *spiritualized* for the individual only as he is able to apply what he reads to himself, to recognize that what is treated of is *his own* evolution, to see for himself and in himself the "identity of the process"—that is to say the Self-operation of the one law.

Putting one's own Self in the place of Krishna, putting Krishna's own words at the conclusion of the seventh chapter in one's own mouth, one will then naturally ask one's Self the very question propounded by Arjuna at the commencement of the eighth chapter. So asking, one will find Krishna's reply "springing up spontaneously in one's own heart." This placing of oneself in the very position of another, even of the highest imaginable Being, is to draw very near to the state called Ishwara. All Theosophists long to come into "communication with the Masters," but few indeed carry their conception of universal brotherhood far enough to seek the Master within their own heart. The "heresy of separateness" holds us fast to the notion that Ishwara is *outside* of us. We are all believers in the fact of Masters as the embodiment of the Supreme Spirit, but find it difficult to rid ourselves of the notion that we ourselves are *not* such embodiments. So our idea of communication is a bodily one. Masters, we believe, can descend to our state, but that we can rise to Their state at will, is hard for us to grasp, because we do not regard it as an act of *will*, but some kind of a process, physical, mental, psychical—miraculous in short.

Only "Spiritual discernment" can bring us to the perception that all evolution begins and ends in the being himself—not outside of him. To see this is spiritual Discernment; to act on the perception

is the spiritual Will; its fruitage is spiritual Knowledge—the knowledge of "the Kingly Mystery."

What that Kingly Mystery is, is shadowed in the ninth chapter —"shadowed" because *direct* perception can never be other than shadowed by one being to another. It is worth while noting the alternations of the Dialogue in the various chapters of the *Gita*. Thus the first chapter opens with the perceptions and inquiries of principles (personified as actors in the drama) representing elemental evolution and the basis of action of all beings below man, as well as of human beings not yet arrived at the stage of Discipleship. How quickly they either disappear or cease a "speaking part"! Then "Sanjaya," representing the "middle-man" of indirect discourse, or the "men" of earlier races and stages, or the "scribes" who recount the "missing links" of all action or evolution—Sanjaya brings Arjuna-Krishna on the stage. Thenceforward it is the Lower Self, the true searcher for Wisdom, who holds the stage. His soliloquy is by us read as a physical dialogue between two characters, but those two characters in truth represent the dual character of each of us. Little by little the characters are reversed, the Higher Self in each assuming a greater and greater importance in the drama of life, the Lower more and more restrained, and by this self-restraint arriving at Spiritual Discernment. Having discerned the Higher Self in life, the Lower now, in the eighth, asks—

> ". . . how men who are fixed in meditation (self-restraint) are to know thee at the hour of death?"

The response runs through the eighth and ninth chapters—that is, through life and death both; through the life and death of universes as well as of a single human existence. That which survives in the lowest is the same as that which survives in the highest. The principle of continuity is the Law of Laws, and that Principle is the principle of Perfection, not of imperfection. We are to give our Devotion to that principle of perfection in all nature and in all beings, in order that it may be embodied consciously by ourselves. Hitherto our actual concentration and meditation have been upon "evil"—upon the imperfections in nature, in others, in ourselves—and not upon the "good," the Perfection which is Spiritual evolution.

"Resist not evil and it will flee from you" is a profoundly Occult saying. But how is such a true gospel of non-resistance to be assimilated by us? There is no action without a basis. If we throw

away our life-basis, the struggle against evil perceived, what shall replace it? What but the perception of "the Universal Divine Perfections?" So all the chapters lead by this principle of continuity to the Devotion of the tenth chapter—devotion to Perfection instead of to its opposite, imperfection.

How universally Evil is necessary to mankind can be easily seen. No religion can get along without its personification of the "Devil." Who ever heard of a "reformer" whose whole life and mission was not bound up in fighting some evil, real or imaginary? What possesses every Arjuna but the fixed stare of "evil" on every hand against which he must "fight" as if salvation depended on destroying evil instead of creating good? Arjuna—and ourselves—are resisting old effects instead of setting up causes for better effects, and so constantly enmeshing ourselves in the fatal wheel of mere repetition—reincarnation—instead of gaining emancipation.

Naturally, then, the eleventh chapter shows that all imperfections inhere in ourselves as well as all perfections; that the same Power which creates the one creates the other; that each one of us is himself Creator, Preserver, Destroyer and Regenerator. We come to see by the Divine Eye of our Higher Self—

> "the whole universe animate and inanimate gathered here in one"

—and that one, our very Self.

There is no room for egotism, desire, aversion, or the instinct of self-preservation—the four degrees of spiritual ignorance—in the man who has come to the "Vision of the Divine Form as including all Forms." Speaking in modern phraseology the trouble and difficulty with us all is that our psychology is all wrong. We think to cure evil by talking about it, by proscribing it, by fighting it, by ignoring it—and so fail to perceive that all the time we are actually dwelling upon evil. "As a man thinketh, so is he." Thinking constantly of evil we think only of escaping from it, as if escape were freedom. Even in our enjoyment of "good," we are subconsciously oppressed by the fear of "evil," so that it is never really absent from our consciousness. In our "intimations of immortality" the fear of death is present!

Not till the "vision splendid" floods the heart and the whole nature of man is seen, with good and evil both in him, not he in them, will any man be able to "rise above the pair of opposites" and gain that devotion which has SELF alone as the constant Ob-

ject. And this is Faith—faith whether in Self manifested or Self unmanifested, faith in Self whether its embodiments be good or evil. What this Faith is, is indicated by Krishna at the close of the twelfth chapter where he calls it the "sacred ambrosia," the "religion of immortality." It is that ichor of the gods of which the Greek dramatists and poets spoke. It is the very meaning of the English words Spirit, Life, Consciousness, Soul, Self.

Theosophy as a Living Power

There is a mysterious power in these doctrines of karma and reincarnation which at last forces them upon the belief of those who take them up for study. It is due to the fact that the ego is itself the experiencer of rebirth and karma and has within a clear recollection of both, and rejoices, as it were, when it finds the lower mind taking them up for study. Each person is the concentration and result of karma, and is compelled from within to believe. The ethics of theosophy as enforced and illuminated by these twin doctrines should therefore be the object of our search and promulgation.

We cannot get at truth by assertion, but only by calm consideration of views advanced, and the self-asserting person is very nearly always close to error. No one mind has all the knowledge possible, and each one is naturally capable of seeing but the one side that is easy for him by reason of his race inheritance and the engrafted tendencies of his education. We are insensibly affected by our education, by the ideas of our youth, by the thought, whatever it was, that preceded our entrance upon theosophy. We require to have patience, not with the system of theosophy, but with ourselves, and be willing to wait for the gradual effect of the new ideas upon us.

—William Q. Judge

on the lookout

Economic Cooperation

Two books by Josiah Warren, first issued in the middle of the nineteenth century and lately republished, distinguish between the individualism that is epitomized as "every man for himself"—the basis of modern economic philosophy—and a reliance on "the absolute sovereignty of the individual" advocated by this author. (*Nation*, Dec. 28, 1974.) He maintained that not individualism itself but its identification with the profit motive has fostered the predatory attitudes and destructive practices whose effects are so painfully evident today. The *Nation* reviewer says:

> Warren believed that harmony and cooperation could well come out of a careful preservation of the sovereignty of the individual. If goods were exchanged at cost and labor exchanged on an equivalency basis then people would feel free to cooperate when the occasion seemed suitable—and when it did not there would be the disappointment and hard feelings entailed by a demand for cooperation that cause it to be given grudgingly, making refusal an act of rebellion.

Fairness Succeeds

Warren pointed out that in pricing merchandise according to the need of the purchaser instead of by actual cost, the businessman is not merely exercising his "freedom," but is exploiting the buyer. This predatory selfishness corrupts the whole economic relationship. Warren demonstrated the workability of his own view by opening a general store in Cincinnati in which all items were priced according to actual cost plus a share of the overhead and a reasonable percentage of profit. Bills and invoices were on public display so that customers could see how prices were figured. Further, only the wholesale cost was to be paid in cash, Warren being reimbursed for his own time and labor with an equivalent amount of time and labor from the customer. If this was impractical, the equivalent could be paid in corn. As people saw the merits of this plan, Warren's business, nicknamed the "Time Store," became a great success.

Implicit in this idea of individualism is confidence that if self-interest is not made the goal of existence, human intelligence will move toward a harmonious order of relationships. The *Nation* writer observes that Warren's theory does not require reorganization of all society, but can be put into practice by anyone at any time.

Freedom and Order

Actually, Warren advocated respect for the individuality of *every* person. E. F. Schumacher discusses the importance of this kind of individualism in his book *Small Is Beautiful*. He says that the size of an enterprise is important only as it affects what people are able to do:

> In the affairs of men, there always appears to be a need for at least two things simultaneously, which, on the face of it, seem to be incompatible and to exclude one another. We always need both freedom and order. We need the freedom of lots and lots of small, autonomous units, and, at the same time, the orderliness of large-scale, possibly global, unity and coordination. When it comes to action, we obviously need small units, because action is a highly personal affair, and one cannot be in touch with more than a very limited number of persons at any one time. But when it comes to the world of ideas, to principles or to ethics, to the indivisibility of peace and also of ecology, we need to recognize the unity of mankind and base our actions upon this recognition.

The Scale of Brotherhood

> Or to put it differently, it is true that all men are brothers, but it is also true that in our active personal relationships we can, in fact, be brothers to only a few of them and we are called upon to show more brotherliness to them than we could possibly show to the whole of mankind. We all know people who freely talk about the brotherhood of man while treating their neighbors as enemies, just as we also know people who have, in fact, excellent relations with all their neighbors while harboring, at the same time, appalling prejudices about all human groups outside their particular circle.
>
> What I wish to emphasize is the *duality* of the human requirement when it comes to the question of size: there is no *single* answer. For his different purposes man needs many different structures, both small ones and large ones, some exclusive and some comprehensive. Yet people find it most difficult to keep two seemingly opposite necessities of truth in their minds at the same time. They always tend to clamour for a final solution, as if in actual life there could ever be a final solution

> other than death. For constructive work, the principal task is always the restoration of some kind of balance. Today, we suffer from an almost universal idolatry of giantism. It is therefore necessary to insist on the virtues of smallness—where this applies. (If there were a prevailing idolatry of smallness, irrespective of subject or purpose, one would have to try and exercise influence in the opposite direction.)

Truly, neither individualism nor collectivism alone can balance their relationships among men and with the rest of nature. In what, then, does the resolution of this puzzle lie? The crux of the mystery, it seems, is the continuity of the reincarnating Ego, individual in its self-conscious perception, yet one with all others in its evolutionary purpose. Theosophical philosophy suggests that this purpose is accomplished by bringing to bear the powers of higher mind on this plane of action.

Hypocrisy in Education

Henry Steele Commager told a conference of educators recently that the glaring inconsistency between the values society expects its schools to promulgate and those practiced by its adult members is the cause of the present confusion in education. (*Saturday Review,* Jan. 11). We have, in effect, saddled our formal institutions of learning with the role of a collective conscience—a function abdicated by a society unwilling or unable to face up to the contradiction between its professed beliefs and its practice. Dr. Commager says:

> If our educational enterprise is in disarray, it is in part because we have asked our schools to perform a miracle—to teach the young to understand the world they live in, and the one they are to live in in the future, when we ourselves show little awareness of our fiduciary obligation to that future; to train them for the skills required to work an economy that will inevitably be public when we ourselves give priority to the private economy; to persuade them to respect all the values that we do not ourselves observe. Much of education today is a massive demonstration in hypocrisy, and it is folly to suppose that the young do not know this.

Failure of Schools

Dr. Commager describes the gap that develops from teaching values that do not coincide with those that motivate practice:

> Rarely, if ever, in the history of education have so many been exposed to so much with results so meager. To judge by results—the results of the past 40 years or so—this whole

> enterprise of relying on schools to reform society by direct teaching has been an unmitigated failure. After 40 years of exposure to world cultures, world politics, world geography, we have turned out to be culturally more alienated, politically more isolated, economically more reckless, and, on the world scene, more chauvinistic and militaristic than at any previous time in our history.

Dr. Commager's solution is to restore ethical unity by returning the responsibility for education to the society at large. He has this further comment:

> A society that is divided, disillusioned, and bewildered, that has lost confidence in its own character and its purpose, cannot expect to achieve unity through the schools. The very fact that we require our schools to do so much that society itself should do is an indication that we do not know what our schools should do and that we are not prepared to do what society itself should do. One advantage of asking schools to do everything is that you then have a kind of experimental social laboratory in which to try out your ideas; another is that as the schools are bound to fail, you then have a scapegoat and can yourself shrug off responsibility.

The Lesson of the Past

What should be done? Mr. Commager believes that the people must take back the extensive responsibilities they have heaped on the schools. Only a brief look at the past shows that education was generally far more effective when its functions were divided among various agencies or parts of society—the home, the farm, the market place, and cultural and religious organizations. The entire social community has responsibility for the shaping of human character—an idea which has been displaced by the commercial credo so earnestly believed in by most Americans. But this return of responsibility will need the support of a reasoned explanation of the meaning of human life, showing that the various fields of human activity are really joined in the service of the inner intelligence of souls or egos in evolution. This was once the outlook of great civilizations. Restoring that outlook will require the collaboration of committed individuals in all walks of life.

Almost Dying

For most people, ideas about the condition after death are matters of belief. To *know* the after-death state would be to enter it, and then return and remember, yet how could this be possible? Only, one might say, in the case of those who are no longer con-

fined by feelings of physical identity, and have evolved independent consciousness and self-awareness, which is adeptship. Occasionally, however, there are experiences of almost dying, and regaining consciousness, and those who go through this passage from state to state no longer look upon their life here as others do. In *Reader's Digest* for last October, Victor Solow, a film-maker, describes such an experience. He tells about his heart arrest, relating that it took emergency personnel twenty-three minutes to restore his heartbeat. The doctors present, meanwhile, believed he was irretrievably dead.

Beyond Brain Consciousness

The accounts of the series of events involved makes good reading, but most interesting of all is Mr. Solow's report of what happened to *him* during the time he was thought to be "dead." As he tells it:

> Later, feeling and thinking my way back into the experience, I discovered why I could not make it a simple recital of events: when I left my body I also left all sensory human tools behind with which we perceive the world we take for real. But I found that I now *knew* certain things about my place in this our world and my relationship to that other reality. My knowing was not through my brain but with another part of me which I cannot explain.

Normally skeptical about religious matters, Mr. Solow reported the experience simply as he remembered it. He seemed to move at high speed toward "a net of great luminosity." Making contact with a grid that functioned as an "energy-converter," he was transported "through form into formlessness, beyond time and space." He was not, he said, "in a place, nor even in a dimension, but rather in a condition of being."

Beyond the Personal Self

> This new "I" was not the I which I knew, but rather a distilled essence of it, yet something vaguely familiar, something I had always known buried under a superstructure of personal fears, hopes, wants and needs. This "I" had no connection to ego. It was final, unchangeable, indivisible, indestructible pure spirit. While completely unique and individual as a fingerprint, "I" was, at the same time, part of some infinite, harmonious and ordered whole. I had been there before.

From this account of his experience, it seems that Mr. Solow reached beyond the astral plane or Kama Loka; perhaps, since he

was not to die, and because he was able to make whatever transition was involved consciously, the experience was a kind of initiation for him, beyond the personal ego's consciousness, which sifted into his waking memory and enabled him to make a record of it. Conceivably, each one having this experience might give a somewhat different report, by reason of individual symbolism and interpretation. Yet there might be expected to be a common quality bespeaking a level of egoic perception.

Altered Outlook

Upon regaining consciousness in the body, he said—

> I could not connect with the world around me. Was I really here now, or was it an illusion? Was that other condition of being I had just experienced the reality, or was *that* the illusion? I would lie there and observe my body with suspicion and amazement. It seemed to be doing things of its own volition and I was a visitor within.

This questioning of the meaning of "reality" would seem to be the most valuable aspect of the experience. In any event, it had a profound effect on his attitude toward earthly life:

> I know, however, that since my return from that other condition of being, many of my attitudes toward our world have changed and continue to change, almost by themselves. A recurrent nostalgia remains for that other reality, that condition of indescribable stillness and quiet where the "I" is part of a harmonious whole. The memory softens the old drives for possession, approval and success. . . . I know that this marvelous place of sun and wind, flowers, children and lovers, this murderous place of evil, ugliness and pain, is only one of many realities through which I must travel to distant and unknown destinations.

"Universal Language"

A few years ago the American painter, Robert Motherwell, remarked in the *American Scholar* (Winter, 1970-71) that the children of all lands seem to know *"an unqualifiedly universal language"*—the language of symbolic forms. To express their vision of the world, they use, he says, "an identical iconography, a language that is taught to them *by no one,* that they need never have seen." Mr. Motherwell calls this language—

> a language of rudimentary but beautiful signs—a circular scribble, an oval, a circle, a square, a triangle, a cross, and so on, colored or not, according to the materials available—with which they construct a completely adequate and beautiful, in

its deeply felt drawing, picture of the universe, both of inside the dome of their own craniums, and of the visible limits of the dome of heaven, and of everything in between. Who would believe, let alone hope, that a universal language, so universal that not a single exception exists on the whole of our globe, not only exists, but has existed unchanged or untouched since the dim beginnings of mankind, of our human world.

Circles and Cross

Why, Motherwell wonders, do children lose the spontaneous expression of universal forms as they grow older? But not all do forget this language. Some deep reminiscence seems to pervade an essay by Harold Goddard in his just (posthumously) published book, *Alphabet of the Imagination* (Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N. J.), in which he considers symbols which long antedate the Christian era:

On the rock walls of Rhodesian cave-dwellings probably dating back to the paleolithic age are found rude drawings, often called sun-wheels by anthropologists. They consist of crude circles within which are crossed lines like two diameters perpendicular to each other: a cross within a circle.

What is this hieroglyph intended to convey? . . .

About the meaning of the circle there is practically no doubt. The circle represents God or Divine Being. . . . But now, if the circle represents God, what does the cross represent? That is a more difficult question and again I can pretend to no proof. But there are reasons for believing that the cross symbolizes man—man within the divine nature.

Reaching Toward Unity

To begin with, if the circle represents unity, the cross plainly represents duality. If the circle is harmony, the cross is contradiction—*cross* purposes. (Notice the vernacular use of *cross* as an adjective: we are *cross* when we are at odds with ourselves.) Furthermore, the cross within the circle may be said to shatter the perfection of the circle by dividing it into parts, although in doing so it only brings out the more the symmetry and wholeness of the circle. So human nature divides the divine nature in which it dwells and yet expresses it in the very act of falling short of it. Then, too, physical man is literally a sort of cross, his head and legs forming the upright, his extended arms the horizontal bar. Nor is man the only living thing in the form of a cross. A tree, with its trunk, its highest boughs, and its lateral branches often resembles a cross when seen against the sky. Man has been called a walking tree.

And so the cross within the circle seems to represent something dual, contradictory, at odds with itself which, neverthe-

less, is reaching out to touch unity and perfection—and does touch it *at four points*. And when, in a later modification of the hieroglyph, lines are drawn connecting the ends of the two diameters and a square emerges, we begin to see what Pythagoras was driving at when he declared that the soul is a square. How like nonsense that sounds! But put the square in the circle and it becomes sense.

Occult Parallels

Harold Goddard, being widely read, knew something of anthropology, mathematics, and religion, but here it seems plain enough that he gives his imagination free rein. While he may be interpreting the studies of antiquarians, he also *feels* the meanings he describes: they come from within himself, as is so often the case in Goddard's writing. Students of *The Secret Doctrine* who read Dr. Goddard's musing discussion of archaic symbolism will undoubtedly be drawn to turn to the early pages of that book (vol. I, 1, 4-5), to refresh their minds with the occult explanation of the glyphs to which he refers. He comes astonishingly close, in some respects, to their ancient meaning. From these considerations readers may wish to go to Goddard's best known work, *The Meaning of Shakespeare,* and also to his much earlier volume, *Studies in New England Transcendentalism.*

Anaerobic Germ?

A report in *Saturday Review/World* for last Oct. 19 relates that Dr. Charles D. Cox, of the University of Massachusetts, being skeptical of the claim that the syphilis spirochete is anaerobic—lives without oxygen—researched the question and ran tests in his laboratory at Amhurst which showed that the spirochete was, "if not exactly a fresh-air fiend, at least aerobic and presumably susceptible to cultivation in the laboratory." This finding reverses the opinion held for the seventy years since the syphilis germ was identified. The researcher now hopes to grow the germ and to see if it is possible to develop a vaccine that will attack it. The report says nothing as to how the presumed anaerobic quality of the germ was thought to have affected the human body in the production of the disease, but only that, like most anaerobic organisms, it "had never been successfully grown in the laboratory." However, this discussion of anaerobism recalls research of nearly fifty years ago in which it was found that living material, if oxygen-starved, may begin to behave like cancerous tissue. (See Lookout, May, 1930.)

Pasteur's Discovery

Many years earlier, writing in *The Secret Doctrine,* H.P.B. pointed out that living cells when deprived of oxygen would prey upon the surrounding tissues. After a discussion of certain of Pasteur's ideas which, in this case, she said, moved in the direction of Occult Science, she continued:

> Certain germ-cells, such as those of yeast, develop and multiply in air, but when deprived of it, they will adapt themselves to life without air and become ferments, absorbing oxygen from substances coming in contact with them, and thereby ruining the latter. The cells in fruit, when lacking free oxygen, act as ferments and stimulate fermentation. "Therefore the vegetable cell manifests in this case its life as an anaerobic being. Why, then, should an organic cell form in this case an exception?" asks Professor Bogolubof. Pasteur shows that in the substance of our tissues and organs, the cell, not finding sufficient oxygen for itself, stimulates fermentation in the same way as the fruit cell. (*S.D.* I, 249.)

Germ Theory Reviewed

The hope expressed by Dr. Cox that he will be able to work out a vaccine against syphilis calls to mind a passage in a recent book, *The Lives of a Cell* (Viking, 1974), by Dr. Lewis Thomas, eminent physician and medical researcher who is presently head of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. While of course no enemy of established immunological techniques, Dr. Thomas says:

> We still think of human disease as the work of an organized, modernized kind of demonology, in which the bacteria are the most visible and centrally placed of our adversaries. We assume that they must somehow relish what they do. They come after us for profit, and there are so many of them that disease seems inevitable, a natural part of the human condition; if we succeed in eliminating one kind of disease there will always be a new one at hand, waiting to take its place.
>
> These are paranoid delusions on a societal scale, explainable in part by our need for enemies, and in part by our memory of what things used to be like. . . . In real life, however, even in our worst circumstances we have always been a relatively minor interest of the vast microbial world. Pathogenicity is not the rule. Indeed it occurs so infrequently and involves such a relatively small number of species, considering the huge population of bacteria on earth, that it has a freakish aspect. Disease usually results from inconclusive negotiations for symbiosis, an overstepping of the line by one side or the other, a biologic misinterpretation of borders.

Our Response "Makes the Disease"

Most of the time, Dr. Thomas says, the bacteria harm us only when *they* are sick; our infection is something "like blundering into someone else's accident." The syphilis spirochete and the malaria germ, he says, may have a particular ability to infect human beings, but doing so is no gain for them. Dr. Thomas also says:

> The micro-organisms that seem to have it in for us in the worst way—the ones that really appear to wish us ill—turn out on close examination to be rather more like bystanders, strays, strangers in from the cold. They will invade and replicate if given the chance, and some of them will get into our deepest tissues and set forth in the blood, but it is our response to their presence that makes the disease. Our arsenals for fighting off bacteria are so powerful, and involve so many different defense mechanisms, that we are more in danger from them than from the invaders. We live in the midst of explosive devices; we are mined. . . . We are, in effect, at the mercy of our own Pentagons, most of the time.

Readers who recall the work of Antoine Béchamp, the nineteenth-century physician and contemporary of Pasteur, as well as his critic, may detect a certain similarity to his ideas in the conceptions of health and disease held by Dr. Thomas.

Roots of Language

Other ideas musingly proposed by Dr. Thomas will be of interest to Theosophical students. In one place he speaks of language as "the single human trait that marks us all genetically, setting us apart from all the rest of life." The capacity to use language, he says, is innate. Language, as he describes it, seems little more than a reflection or embodiment in practice of the Manasic principle:

> Correct grammar (correct in the logical, not fashionable sense) is as much a biologic characteristic of our species as feathers on birds.
>
> If this is true, it would mean that the human mind is pre-set, in some primary sense, to generate more than just the parts of speech. . . . This view of things is compatible with the very old notion that a framework for meaning is somehow built into our minds at birth.

Here one recalls H.P.B.'s comment (*S.D.* II, 661): "Nor has human speech developed from the various animal sounds. A *human* brain is necessary for *human* speech." She adds that like the bee and wheat, the origin of the roots of language have never been

discovered. How could they, when they are really an endowmen coming from a higher plane—brought by the incarnating host c mind-born beings? This endowment is hardly biological!

The Free and Searching Mind

Interestingly, discussing the difference between the one dimen sional communications of cellular intelligence and the work of th human mind, Dr. Thomas stresses the versatility of our though and its capacity to jump from range to range—in effect, to wor by analogy and correspondence:

> Only the human mind is designed to work in this way, programmed to drift away in the presence of locked-on information, straying from each point in a hunt for a better, different point.
>
> If it were not for the capacity for ambiguity, for the sensing of strangeness, that words in all languages provide, we would have no way of recognizing the layers of counterpoint in meaning, and we might be spending all our time sitting on stone fences, staring into the sun. To be sure, we would always have had some everyday use to make of the alphabet, and we might have reached the same capacity for small talk, but it is unlikely that we would have been able to evolve from words to Bach. The great thing about human language is that it prevents us from sticking to the matter at hand.

Dr. Thomas' gentle humor and quiet ironies should bring enjoy ment to readers who are interested in what the best of the scientis are thinking about, these days.